

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

14 JULY 2011

REPORT OF
CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

COUNCIL DECISION/

Leader of the Council – Councillor Cook

PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES REVIEW

1. Summary

This is an information report to update Members regarding the Parliamentary Constituencies review currently being undertaken by the four UK Boundary Commissions in their respective parts of the UK.

2. Recommendations

That the information be received.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

To ensure that Members are kept up to date with the proposed review of Parliamentary Constituency boundaries.

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;

- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;
- and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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Summary

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RECOMMENDATION

That the information be received.

DETAIL

1. The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 requires the four Boundary Commissions to conduct a review of the parliamentary constituencies in their part of the UK and to submit final reports to Government before 1 October, 2013.
2. The Boundary Commission for England has formally commenced its part of the review.
3. The Commission is required by statute to allocate a precise number of constituencies to England (calculated from a fixed total for the whole of the UK of 600 constituencies), and it must ensure that every constituency has an electorate that is within 5% of the UK electoral quota. Any other factors which may be considered are subordinate to this “electoral parity” rule.
4. The number of electors whose names appear on the register of parliamentary electors published between 1 December, 2010 and 1 February, 2011 will be the basis for the review and the recommendations to Government on proposals for changed constituencies.
5. Using this data, the UK electoral quota has been calculated as 76,641 electors. Therefore every constituency in England must have an electorate that is no smaller than 72,810 and no larger than 80,473.
6. In Stockton’s case, the figures for the 2010 and for 2011 registers of parliamentary electors showed there to be 66,990 and 67,333 electors in the Stockton North

Constituency and 73,924 and 74,521 in Stockton South. The relevant details from the Commissions website are attached **at the Appendix**.

7. In view of the requirements to meet the rule about the defined number of Constituencies and the 5% electoral parity target, about which there is no choice, the Boundary Commission has concluded that very extensive and wide ranging changes to the existing pattern and composition of constituencies will be necessary.
8. In particular the Commission has said that many of the existing constituencies which have an electorate that is currently within the 5% parity target will nonetheless, need to be altered in order to create feasible constituencies in the surrounding area. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that simply because an existing Constituency (such as Stockton South) appears to have an electorate within the parameters of 72,810 and 80,473 it will be immune from change.
9. Whilst the Commission must satisfy the number of constituencies and electoral parity requirements as a priority, it proposes to take into account as part of the review the local government boundaries as they existed on 6 May, 2010. However, if the need arises, the Commission will divide wards between constituencies.
10. In addition after consultation, the Commission will be using the European Elections electoral regions as a template for grouping and allocating the 500 constituencies across England.
11. Based on its electorate, the North East will be allocated 26 constituencies.
12. The Commission has indicated that its initial proposals are likely to be published in the early part of September (week commencing the 12th) following which there will be a 12 week consultation period during which interested persons can comment on the proposals. The Commission will be visiting each region during this period to hold public meetings to gather views. Representations will be able to be made at the meetings primarily by qualifying political parties (ones registered under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000) and either they have at least one Member of the House of Commons representing a constituency in the region in which the hearing is being held, or have received at least 10% of the votes cast in the region in the most recent parliamentary general election. Other persons considered by the hearing Chair to have an interest in any of the proposals for change will also be allowed to put forward their views.
13. As and when more information about the review and the public hearings is published, Members will be kept apprised.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

14. There are no financial or legal implications arising directly from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

15. The report is considered to be a low risk category report.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

16. Enhancing democratic representation and local democracy is a key feature of the Council Plan.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

17. An assessment has not been considered necessary for the purpose of this report.

CONSULTATION

18. All Members of the Council will be advised of this report. The Boundary Commission will consult relevant political parties and individuals as part of the review.

Director of Law & Democracy

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Background Papers:

Not applicable

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

The report affects all wards

Property Implications:

Not applicable